United Nations E/2007/L.22/Rev.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
2 October 2007

Original: English

Resumed substantive session of 2007
New York, 4 October 2007
Agenda item 13 (i)
Economic and environmental questions: United Nations Forum on Forests

Programme budget implications of the recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its seventh session

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Forum on Forests, in its report on its seventh session,[1] in describing the action it had taken on the adoption of its resolution 7/1, entitled "Multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2007-2015",[2] noted that the Secretary had read out an oral statement[3] prepared by the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts of the United Nations Secretariat on the draft resolution of the Forum for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.[4] In its statement, the Division noted that delays in finalizing consultations on the draft resolution had not provided the Secretariat with the requisite 48-hour minimum period required to prepare and present the statement of the financial implications of the draft resolution. The statement concluded with a commitment to carry out a thorough review of the implications of the draft resolution and to submit a written statement containing a detailed analysis of its programme budget implications to the Council at its substantive session of 2007. The results of the initial review were set out in a statement of programme budget implications (E/2007/L.22).

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council 2007, Supplement No. 22* (E/2007/42 and Corr.1).
[2] Ibid., chap. I, sect. C.
[3] Ibid., chap. II, para. 7.
[4] Ibid., chap. I, sect. A.

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2. After consideration of this issue at its substantive session in July 2007, the Economic and Social Council decided, by its decision 2007/257, to defer action on the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its seventh session to its next resumed substantive session. Subsequently, the draft resolution contained in the report of the Forum[4] was revised (E/2007/L.39). The results of the review of its budgetary implications are set out below.

II. Relevant requests contained in the draft resolution

3. Under the terms of paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 of the revised draft resolution recommended by the United Nations Forum on Forests for adoption by the Economic and Social Council,[5] the Council would, inter alia:

(a) Note that the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its seventh session, adopted a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(b) Reiterate paragraph 17 of its resolution 2006/49, in which it decided to consider ways of strengthening the secretariat of the Forum, within existing resources, as well as through increased voluntary extrabudgetary resources to enable it to fulfil its function more effectively, bearing in mind paragraph 163 (b) of the 2005 World Summit outcome;[6]

(c) Refer in particular to paragraphs 5 (f), 20 and 21 of its resolution 2006/49, in which it invited the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to undertake activities related to supporting developing countries, as well as countries with economies in transition, in accessing additional national and international funding; monitoring, assessment and reporting; and the submission of consolidated reports on initiatives and activities of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests;

(d) Recommend to the General Assembly that it adopt the draft resolution, in which it would decide, inter alia, to adopt the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(e) Decide that the Forum should, within existing resources, convene before its eighth session, an open-ended ad hoc expert group to develop proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework and invite the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to assist in the development of those proposals.

4. During its seventh session the Forum, by its resolution 7/1, also adopted its multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015, which was also brought to the attention of the Council in the report.[2]

III. Relationship of the requests to the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2008-2009

5. The activities referred to in the draft resolution would fall under subprogramme 9, Sustainable forest management, of programme 7, Economic and

[5] Ibid., chap. I, sect. A, and E/2007/L.39.

[6] General Assembly resolution 60/1.

social affairs, of the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2008-2009, as revised by the General Assembly.[7] However, since they also fall under subprogramme 9, Sustainable forest management, of section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009,[8] modifications to the programme of work and resource requirements resulting from the requests contained in the draft resolution will be considered by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session in the context of its consideration of section 9 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

IV. Activities by which the proposed requests would be carried out

6. Should the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the multi-year programme of work of the Forum be approved by the General Assembly, the secretariat of the Forum would support its implementation through, inter alia:

(a) Preparing, in coordination with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, analytical consolidated reports that assess overall progress made on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument and towards the achievement of the four global objectives on forests;

(b) Liaising, coordinating and following up on the establishment of the global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework and managing the substantive areas of the means of implementation;

(c) Managing the preparation of substantive documentation and the reporting of the meetings related to the Forum and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument;

(d) Conceptualizing, planning and managing expert meetings and preparatory working meetings, panels and seminars.

7. In this connection, the secretariat would: (a) facilitate consultations of experts on regional inputs to the global dialogue; (b) organize interactive panels and special events during the sessions of the Forum; (c) undertake advisory missions for planning coordinated and harmonized inputs to the work of the Forum; (d) prepare subregional/regional, national or sectoral analyses that provide a basis for national Governments and regional organizations in their forest policy development; and (e) monitor forest policy developments in the regions and identify recurrent and emerging issues of concern to the Forum.

8. In preparation for an open-ended ad hoc expert group meeting to develop proposals for the elaboration of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework, which is to be held in 2008, a review of current financial mechanisms and an assessment of the viability for adoption of a voluntary global mechanism would be undertaken in collaboration with relevant members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

9. The adoption and implementation of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for 2007-2015 would also give rise to a number of new activities. For the

[7] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/61/6/Rev.1).
[8] A/62/6 (Sect. 9).

Forum's eighth session in 2009, under the overall themes of "Forests in a changing environment" and "Means of implementation for sustainable forest management", the secretariat of the Forum would prepare parliamentary documents in collaboration with relevant members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

10. In adopting the multi-year programme of work, the Forum laid out the monitoring, assessment and reporting requirements for the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. In that connection, the secretariat of the Forum would undertake: (a) the assessment and synthesis of national reports and the proposal of recommendations to the Forum on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument; (b) the creation and maintenance of databases of country information and national reports submitted to the Forum; and (c) the drafting of specified inputs for technical papers and analytical studies on selected global, regional, national or sectoral aspects of sustainable forest management.

V. Modifications required in the programme of work and the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

11. In order to take into account the provisions of the draft resolution, the programme narrative and outputs of section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009[8] would be modified and would be incorporated into the programme of work of section 9, subject to the approval by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. The required modifications to the outputs would be as follows:

Table 9.25

Expected accomplishment (a): the words "adoption and" would be deleted and the words "on all types of forests" would be added after the words "non-legally binding instrument";

Indicator of achievement (a): the words "and collaborative actions on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and" would be inserted between the words "decisions" and "on improvement";

Expected accomplishment (b): the words "on progress" would be inserted between the words "actions" and "towards";

Expected accomplishment (c): the words "on sustainable forest management" would be inserted between the words "management" and "among".

Paragraph 9.78

(a) (i) a. Substantive servicing of meetings: the words "intersessional meetings (80)" would be replaced with the words "intersessional meetings (56)";

(a) (i) b. Parliamentary documentation: the following text, "report on regional input (1); report on forests and climate change (1); report on reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including in low forest cover countries (1); report on forests and biodiversity conservation (1); report on emerging issues (1); Chairman's summary of the open-ended ad hoc

expert group on a global financial mechanism (1); note on progress towards sustainable forest management (1); note on the progress in implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (1); note on the progress towards achieving the four global objectives on forests (1); note on the Trust Fund in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (1); note on the activities of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the work of the Forum (1); and provisional agenda and note on the ad hoc expert group on a global financial mechanism (2), would be added;

(a) (iii) Ad hoc expert groups: the words "seven expert group meetings on:" would be deleted and the words "three expert group meetings on:" would be inserted; the words "regional aspects of United Nations Forum on Forests", "reclustering and subject indexing of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests Proposals for Action", "annexes of a non-legally binding instrument for the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management" and "multi-stakeholder dialogue on sustainable forest management: civil society perspectives in conjunction with the intersessional work and the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (2)" would be deleted and the words "open-ended meeting on the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/financing framework" would be added;

(b) (iii) Booklets, fact sheets, wallcharts, information kits: the words "information kit on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (1); booklet on review of the current financial mechanisms (1)" would be added;

(b) (v) Special events: the words "interactive panels with stakeholders, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and regional organizations (3)" would be added;

(b) (vi) Technical material: the words "guidelines and reporting format on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument (6); guidelines for providing regional inputs (3); guidelines for the review of existing current financial mechanisms (3); guidelines for providing information on events and initiatives relevant to the preparations for the International Year of Forests (3)" would be added;

(b) (viii) Substantive servicing of inter-agency meetings: the words "Collaborative Partnership on Forests initiative to review the current international financing mechanisms (2)" would be added;

(c) (i) Advisory services: the words "provision of expert advice to Member States and regional organizations on the non-legally binding instrument (support to country-led initiatives) (3)" would be added.

VI. Estimated resource requirements

A. Conference-servicing requirements

12. The conference-servicing requirements, at full cost, for the open-ended ad hoc working group on the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework to be convened in 2008 in New York are estimated at $331,900. It is also estimated that there would be one week of meetings in December 2008, with two meetings per day, for a total of 10 meetings. Interpretation would be provided in all six official languages and documentation to be processed in the six official languages is estimated at 68 pages (pre-session) and 40 pages (post-session). As regards the venue of the meeting, in accordance with the Headquarters principle embodied in General Assembly resolution 40/243, the meetings of the United Nations Forum on Forests should be held in New York. Furthermore, the dates of these meetings are subject to the availability of conference-servicing facilities and resources and would be determined in consultation with the Secretariat.

B. Non-conference-servicing requirements: section 9, Economic and social affairs

13. Should the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the multi-year programme of work of the Forum be approved by the General Assembly, the new and expanded functions resulting from such adoption would require the strengthening of the secretariat of the Forum. These functions include the facilitation, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the non-legally binding instrument and the monitoring of and follow-up to the achievement of the global objectives on forests and other internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It is estimated that three new posts (1 P-5, 1 P-4 and 1 P-3) and non-post resources, amounting to $1,023,800, would be required, as follows:

1. Post requirements ($532,100)

(a) Senior Forest Affairs Officer (P-5): responsible for the implementation and coordination of activities related to the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, including liaison with governing bodies of other relevant environmental conventions, instruments and organizations and for the preparation of the summary and analytical reports called for by the multi-year programme of work; managing the preparation of substantive documentation for and the reporting of the meetings related to the international instrument on all types of forests; and planning and managing expert group meetings, panels and seminars;

(b) Forest Affairs Officer (P-4): responsible for managing and coordinating subregional and regional inputs as an integral and essential component of the regular sessions of the Forum; preparation of subregional/regional, national or sectoral analysis that provides a basis for advising national Governments and regional organizations on forest policy development issues; monitoring forest policy developments in the regions and identifying recurrent and emerging issues of concern to the Forum; drafting policy recommendations; and formulating proposals

for development strategies, policies and measures for presentation to the intergovernmental bodies;

(c) Forest Affairs Officer (P-3): responsible for assessing and synthesizing national reports and propose recommendations to the Forum on implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; developing and maintaining databases of national reports submitted to the Forum; providing substantive support to the multi-stakeholder dialogue; develop and coordinate the Forum's major group focal point system and organizing the Forum secretariat/multi-stakeholder dialogue consultation meetings; undertaking policy-oriented research, analysing trends and developments; assisting in the development of Organization-led initiatives and other partnerships; monitoring and assessing the implementation of cooperation programmes and projects based on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; drafting specified inputs for technical papers and analytical studies on selected global, regional, national or sectoral aspects of sustainable forest management; and assisting in the organization and servicing of expert group meetings, seminars and panels on forest policy issues.

2. **Non-post requirements ($491,700)**

(a) Consultants ($80,000): provision of $80,000, covering 16 consultancy work-months, is required to secure specialized expertise not available in the Secretariat to cover reports and studies on the following topics: (i) proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism, a portfolio approach and a forest financing framework; (ii) forests and climate change; (iii) reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification; and (iv) forests and biodiversity conservation;

(b) Expert group meetings ($332,800): provision of $332,800 is required to convene, in 2008, prior to the eighth session of the Forum, an open-ended ad hoc expert group meeting to prepare proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism, a portfolio approach and a forest financing framework. It is estimated that the meeting would be convened in New York for five days with participation of 75 governmental experts, in particular experts from developing and least developed countries;

(c) Travel of staff ($60,000): provision of $60,000 is required for six missions per year to support engagement of the various regional and subregional processes in the effort to engage multi-stakeholders and relevant forest-related international, regional, subregional bodies, mechanisms and processes in exploring joint activities towards the achievement of sustainable forest management, the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(d) General operating expenses ($11,400): provision of $11,400 is required to cover costs of communications ($6,000) and maintenance of office automation equipment, including local area network (LAN) support services ($5,400);

(e) Supplies and materials ($1,500): provision of $1,500 is required for supplies and materials, including paper, stationery, electronic data and word processing supplies;

(f) Furniture and equipment ($6,000): provision of $6,000 is required for acquisition of office automation equipment, including personal computers and printers for the proposed three new posts.

C. Section 28D, Office of Central Support Services

14. The additional amount of $143,900 is needed under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, as follows:

(a) Rental and maintenance of premises ($131,400): an additional amount of $131,400 is required to provide for the recurrent costs of rental of office space for three new posts ($66,000) and for the one-time costs for related minor alteration/ improvements to rented premises ($65,400). As the Headquarters facilities, including leased facilities, are at maximum capacity, it is no longer possible to accommodate the additional personnel requirements emanating from the new mandates without leasing additional property/office space;

(b) Common support costs ($12,500): an additional amount of $12,500 is required to provide for contractual services of sound technicians to service the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc expert group.

D. Section 35, Staff assessment

15. The amount of $78,800 is needed to provide for staff assessment for the three new posts under section 32, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

16. The total additional requirements for the implementation of the above activities are estimated at $1,578,400. After deduction of the amount of $897,500, to be reprogrammed or absorbed within existing resources of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, as explained in paragraphs 17 to 27 below, it is assumed that the balance of $680,900 would be financed from extrabudgetary resources.

	Total additional requirements	*To be programmed (regular budget)*	*To be met from extrabudgetary resources*[a]
Conference-servicing requirements	331 900	331 900	—
Section 9			
Posts	532 100	177 800	354 300
Consultants	80 000	36 000	44 000
Expert group meetings	332 800	263 200	69 600
Travel of staff	60 000		60 000
General operating expenses	11 400	3 800	7 600
Supplies and materials	15 000	500	1 000
Furniture and equipment	6 000	2 000	4 000
Subtotal, section 9	**1 023 800**	**483 300**	**540 500**
Section 28D	143 900	56 300	87 600
Section 35	78 800	26 000	52 800
Grand total	**1 578 400**	**897 500**	**680 900**

[a] Providing that sufficient extrabudgetary resources are available.

VII. Potential for absorption during the biennium 2008-2009

17. With regard to conference-servicing costs for the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc expert group on the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework, it is estimated that conference services would be provided for those meetings on an "as available" basis, which means that provision has been made under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009[9] for the conference-servicing of meetings scheduled to take place within specific time periods. If the meetings authorized subsequently could be accommodated within these periods, the related conference-servicing requirements would be also met under the existing provision. Consequently, the additional amount of $331,900 required for conference servicing of the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc working group would be met within resources under section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. Similarly, the additional amount of $56,300 including (a) $43,800 to provide for rental of office space and related minor alterations/improvements to rented premises for the redeployed P-4 post (see para. 20 below); and (b) $12,500 to provide for contractual services of sound technicians would be accommodated under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services, of the proposed programme budget.[10]

18. In its resolution 2000/35, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to establish a compact secretariat, strengthened through staff

[9] A/62/6 (Sect. 2).

[10] A/62/6 (Sect. 28D).

from secretariats of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, to service the Forum and to support the collaborative partnership on forests. Consequently, the General Assembly, in part IV of its resolution 56/255, approved the provision of four Professional level and two General Service (Other level) posts, which have been maintained since then under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the programme budget.

19. During the first seven years of the Forum's existence, the staff of the secretariat of the Forum that was funded from the regular budget was supplemented by three temporary posts at the Professional level funded from the Trust Fund in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests. The responsibilities of the extrabudgetary posts were focused on coordination and substantive support to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the management of intersessional work, including country and organization-led initiatives, and the provision of support and policy advice to Governments and organizations, upon request. It is expected that funding arrangements for these posts would continue in the biennium 2008-2009. Since its establishment, the secretariat has also been supported by senior staff members seconded from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). However, the work demands on those organizations have exerted pressure on their staffing complements and, as of 1 August 2007, no staff from these other organizations would be available for secondment to the Forum secretariat. No further commitments have been received to date. Therefore, the arrangement envisioned by the Council at the establishment of the Forum would not appear to be sustainable over a long period.

20. No provision has been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 for staff resources required for the additional outputs under the Forum's multi-year programme of work, or for the activities related to the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. It is envisaged that one Professional post at the P-4 level would be redeployed from within the existing staff complement of section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget, to undertake work in connection with the management and coordination of subregional and regional inputs which would form an integral and essential component of the regular session of the Forum.

21. The new P-5 and P-3 posts, which focus on the work on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, would be required subsequent to the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism, which is essential to the successful implementation of the non-legally binding instrument, which would be clarified after the holding of the open-ended ad hoc expert meeting in December 2008. The costs of these posts, including the related costs for supplies, equipment, office rental and communications activities, would be met through extrabudgetary resources to the extent that additional voluntary contributions are received by the Secretariat.

22. No provision has been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 to cover the costs of the open-ended ad hoc group on the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework, which amount to $332,800. However, section 9 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 includes a provision of $137,900 for travel of the Forum's members to annual sessions. Since the Forum

would meet biennially, starting with its eighth session in 2009, the amount of $69,000 would be reprogrammed to offset a portion of the costs for the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc working group. In addition, five programmed ad hoc expert group meetings included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 on regional aspects of the United Nations Forum on Forests ($41,000), reclustering and subject indexing of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action ($41,000), the annexes of a non-legally binding instrument for the thematic elements of sustainable forest management ($41,000) and two multi-stakeholder dialogues on sustainable forest management ($71,200), would not be undertaken. The related total amount of $194,200 would also be reprogrammed to cover the cost of the open-ended ad hoc group meeting. The balance of $69,600 would be met through extrabudgetary resources.

23. The requirements of $80,000 under consultants would be covered in part from provisions in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 for specialized expertise to assist in the preparation of studies and reports that will not be undertaken, namely the reclustering and subject indexing of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action ($20,000) and the annexes of a non-legally binding instrument for the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management ($16,000). These resources would be reprogrammed to cover the cost for consultancies for climate change and reversing loss of forest cover. To the extent that funds are available, the consultancy requirements for the biodiversity conservation and funding mechanism ($44,000) would be financed from extrabudgetary resources.

24. The requirements of $60,000 under staff travel to support the engagement of various regional and subregional processes to explore joint activities towards the achievement of sustainable forest management, the global objectives of forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument would be financed from extrabudgetary resources, subject to the availability of additional voluntary contributions.

25. The non-post requirements of $6,300 related to the redeployed P-4 post, including general operating expenses ($3,800), supplies and materials ($500) and office automation equipment ($2,000), have been already included under section 9 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. Similar requirements in support of the new P-5 and P-3 posts ($12,600) would be financed from extrabudgetary resources.

26. As regards extrabudgetary resources, the total reserves and fund balances of the Trust Fund in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests as of 30 September 2007 amounted to $2,983,737. It is estimated that the resources available in the Trust Fund in 2008-2009 would be approximately $3,600,000.

27. Consequently, should the Economic and Social Council adopt the draft resolution, no additional appropriations would be required over and above the resources of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

VIII. Conclusion

28. The adoption by the Economic and Social Council of the draft resolution contained in the report of the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests,[4] as revised, would not give rise to additional requirements in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

29. The General Assembly is also requested to approve the proposed modifications to the programme narrative and outputs to be incorporated into the programme of work of section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.